

Fostering business to business relationship between SPCs and Seed Unions in Tigray

A consultative workshop on business to business (B2B) relationship between Seed Producer Cooperatives (SPCs) and seed unions was organized by ISSD Tigray in collaboration with Tigray cooperative and marketing agency on 23rd September 2019 at Mekelle University. Representatives of 11 SPCs, two seed unions and key stakeholders (BoARD, Cooperative agency, ATA, TAMPA, AGP, Mekelle University, CASCAPE, REALIZE) were participated in the workshop. The consultative workshop had two main objectives;

- Identify current status and challenges of SPCs and seed unions in the region
- Investigate main factors affecting smooth relationship between the SPCs and seed unions

The consultative workshop was officially opened by Dr. Yirga Weldu (Dean College of Dryland Agriculture and Natural Resources). He emphasized that "ISSD project has played a significant role in the area of seed sector improvement and its continued efforts to strengthen the SPCs and seed unions capacity in seed production and supply in the region. The ISSD effort is highly appreciated by the University. The best way to get out of poverty is creating access to improved quality seed supply sustainably. In production and supply of improved seeds, the role of SPCs and unions is quiet important. In order to enhance their regular seed production channels, considering efficient relationship between SPCs and unions is necessary." Moreover, he underlined that, the relationship among SPCs and unions as well as the partnership created with universities and other partners is crucial.

After the welcome and opening remarks, delivered by Dr. Addis Abraha (ISSD Tigray unit manager) and Dr. Yirga Weldu respectively; ISSD experts presented two latest assessment results concerning the 25 SPCs and two seed unions; and how to foster the B2B relationships of the SPCs and seed unions. The two presentations on the SPCs and seed unions' existing conditions were used as an entry point to further discussions and situational analysis of the major challenges and suggested future solutions.

According to the survey result, most of the SPCs often fail to effectively play their roles in production and supplying of quality seeds. The main challenges identified were:

- Lack of access of land for seed store construction;
- Limited access to basic seed;
- Inability to qualify for certificate of competence (CoC);
- Limited access to seed quality assurance services;

- Limited access to seed processing facilities;
- Lack of marketing capability and shortage of working capital;
- Lack of transportation vehicles to distribute and collect seeds;
- Lack of electricity (power) to use the seed cleaner machines.



The seed business of SPCs in the region can be improved sustainably through:

- ✓ Supply of continuous Early Generation Seed (EGS) production so as to produce enough amount of seeds of different varieties;
- ✓ Introduce flexible credit facility procedures for the seed producers (SPCs and seed unions);
- ✓ Creating market access and institutionalize linkages with relevant stakeholders;
- ✓ Follow a demand based seed production and supply;
- ✓ Strengthen the SPCs infrastructure facilities such as seed storage, seed cleaning, transportation;
- ✓ Facilitate capacity building activities like trainings, experience sharing and awareness creation to enhance the SPCs and unions seed production capacity;
- ✓ Conduct monitoring and evaluation (technical, organizational, auditing, etc.).

Currently, there are 25 SPCs (5 direct and 20 indirect support) which faced so many institutional, organizational and financial challenges and they have a total number of 3,580 members (652 or 18.2% female). With the technical and financial support of ISSD for the past eight years, their capital growth rate has reached to 96.79% which is increasing from ETB 344,325 in 2012 to ETB 10,758,926 in the year 2019.

The one day consultative workshop on B2B relationship between SPCs and seed unions facilitated was very interactive and participatory. In addition, it tried to screen the main challenges faced SPCs and seed unions from different angles; and postulates their possible solutions. Finally, the consultative workshop was official closed by the ISSD Tigray unit manager appreciating all the participants for their time and effective contribution to improve the B2B relationship between SPCs and seed unions in the region.